

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T ATHENS 7727

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EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, GR
SUBJ: DEFENSE MINISTER AVEROFF AGAIN WARNS COUP PLOTTERS

REF: ATHENS 7314

1. SPEAKING TO THE GRADUATING CLASS OF THE HIGHER WAR COLLEGE AT THESSALONIKI ON AUGUST 12, DEFENSE MINISTER AVEROFF ISSUED ANOTHER WARNING TO THOSE RETIRED OFFICERS WHO MAY BE CONSIDERING SOME KIND OF COUP ACTION AGAINST THE CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT. AVEROFF HAD ISSUED A SIMILAR WARNING A WEEK EARLIER (ON AUGUST 4--REFTEL) DURING AN INSPECTION TOUR OF THE AEGEAN ISLANDS.

2. IN THE FIRST PART OF HIS COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS, AVEROFF PRAISED THE GRADUATES OF THE WAR COLLEGE AND THEIR ROLE IN THE DEFENSE OF GREECE. THEY WERE RECEIVING THEIR DIPLOMAS, HE SAID, AT A DIFFICULT TIME FOR THE COUNTRY. ALTHOUGH THE GREEK SIDE SHOWED POLITICAL STABILITY AND A CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE, DIFFICULTIES WOULD CONTINUE BECAUSE THERE WAS NO RECIPROCATATION FROM THE OTHER SIDE, OBVIOUSLY MEANING TURKEY. AVEROFF WENT ON TO UNDERLINE THE SPEED WITH WHICH THE OFFICER CORPS HAD RECOVERED FROM THE DEEP WOUNDS IT HAD RECEIVED (AS A RESULT OF THE JUNTA EXPERIENCE). THE FACT UNITY AND DISCIPLINE EXISTED IN THE ARMY, WHICH NOW ENJOYED THE RESPECT AND LOVE OF THE GREEK PEOPLE, WAS A FEAT FOR WHICH THE OFFICERS DESERVED CREDIT, HE ADDED.

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3. AVEROFF THEN POINTED OUT THAT HE WAS PARTICULARLY HAPPY BECAUSE HE WAS ABLE, WITH THE SUPPORT OF A MAN OF INTERNATIONAL STATURE (MEANING PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS), TO DEAL WITH THE MANY ATTACKS AGAINST THE OFFICERS. AVEROFF SAID HE HAD DEFENDED THE OFFICERS AS MUCH AS HE SHOULD. HE HAD SAID BEFORE AND REPEATED NOW AGAIN, HE CONTINUED, THAT THE "PURIFICATION" OF THE ARMED

FORCES (FROM JUNTA SYMPATHIZERS) HAD BEEN COMPLETED DEFINITELY AND IRREVOCABLY. "HOWEVER, IT HAD BEEN COMPLETED ONLY FOR THOSE WHO ARE LAW-ABIDING AND ACCEPT DISCIPLINE," HE SAID POINTEDLY. "CERTAIN RETIRED OFFICERS," HE WENT ON, "WHO FORGET THAT THEY ABOVE ALL HURT THE ARMY WITH THEIR FOOLISHNESS, WANT TO PRESENT THEMSELVES TODAY AS DEFENDERS OF THE OFFICER CORPS. I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT IS GOING ON. I KNOW A LOT BETTER THAN THEY THINK. I KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON BETWEEN THEM AND BETWEEN YOU. AND FOR THAT REASON I LOOK AT THEM WITH PITY AND IN YOUR CASE I TAKE A STAND OF LOVE AND HONOR. IN THE BEGINNING I SPOKE TO YOU ABOUT DIFFICULT TIMES. TRULY WE ARE GOING THROUGH THEM. BUT ON THE OTHER HAND, WE MUST BE CONSCIOUS THAT THE COUNTRY IS DOING WELL. GRUMBLING, DISPUTES, AND CERTAIN CONCERNS EXIST. THEY ARE ABSENT ONLY IN CEMETERIES. BUT WHO CAN DENY THE EXTRAORDINARY UPWARD COURSE OF THIS COUNTRY. UPWARDS IN ALL AREAS. FOR THAT REASON," MR. AVEROFF CONCLUDED, "WE MUST ADVANCE WITH FAITH AND OPTIMISM, GUIDED BY OUR DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM."

4. AVEROFF HAS BEEN CRITICIZED PUBLICLY IN RIGHT-WING ELEFTHEROS COSMOS AND ULTRA CONSERVATIVE ESTIA FOR THIS LATEST "WARNING" AND THE EARLIER ONE FROM THE DODECANESE. IN A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OF ESTIA ON AUGUST 17, AVEROFF RESPONDED TO ONE SUCH ATTACK SAYING THAT HE WAS NOT CRITICIZING RETIRED OFFICERS GENERALLY. TO THE CONTRARY, HE WENT ON, I HONOR THEM FOR THEIR EARLIER SERVICE TO THE NATION. HOWEVER, THE WRITER (OF THE LETTER TO WHICH AVEROFF WAS RESPONDING) KNOWS VERY WELL WHO I AM TALKING ABOUT. I HAVE ALWAYS
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MADE IT CLEAR, USING THE EXPRESSION "CERTAIN FOOLS" OR "CERTAIN UNREPENTED FANATICS." MY CRITICISM AND WARNINGS CONCERN A SMALL NUMBER OF RETIRED OFFICERS. IT HAS TO DO WITH A SMALL NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO FORGET THAT THEY WERE THE CHAMPIONS OF THE JUNTA AND TODAY TRY TO CREATE ISSUES IGNORING THE TERRIBLE CONSEQUENCES WHICH THEIR SMALLEST ACTION WOULD BRING.

5. COMMENT: THE DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, OF COURSE, OF REPORTS CONCERNING COUP PLOTTING AGAINST THE CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT ON THE PART OF CERTAIN RIGHT-WING, JUNTIST AND PRO-ROYALIST GROUPS. IN OUR VIEW AVEROFF'S STATEMENTS OF AUGUST 4 AND 12 ARE CLEARLY AIMED AT THESE PLOTTERS AND INDICATE THAT THE CARAMANLIS GOVERNMENT KNOWS WHAT IS GOING ON. MOREOVER, WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE NECESSARY STEPS HAVE BEEN AND ARE BEING TAKEN TO DEAL WITH A POSSIBLE FOOLISH MOVE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT.
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